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**THE USE OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN FOREIGN  
LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR MOTIVATION AND L2  
PERCEPTION.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Formative assessment provides students with immediate feedback, which they can apply to their language skills in order to improve them. Summative assessment, may lead to the student not feeling motivated and changing their perspective of L2 learning to a negative one. Thus, the present paper intends to show that formative assessment is able to motivate students and change their perspective on L2, after having former negative experiences with language learning.

**Key-words:** formative assessment, motivation, foreign language learning.

## **RESUM**

L'avaluació formativa facilita en els alumnes un *feedback* immediat, aconseguint així una millora en el idioma de manera eficient. L'avaluació sumativa, l'avaluació pot portar a que l'estudiant no es senti motivat i que la seva perspectiva sobre l'aprenentatge d'una L2 canviï de forma negativa. Per aquest motiu, aquest treball pretén mostrar com l'avaluació formativa pot ajudar a motivar als estudiants i canviar la seva idea predeterminades sobre l'aprenentatge d'una L2, tot i haver tingut experiències negatives prèvies en aquest àmbit.

**Paraules clau:** avaluació formativa, motivació, aprenentatge d'una llengua estrangera.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>2.1. SECOND LANGUAGE OR FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<b>3. ASSESSMENT.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>3.1. ASSESSMENT TYPES.....</i>	<i>4</i>
3.1.1. SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT.....	4
3.1.2. FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT .....	5
<b>4. MOTIVATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>4.1. MAIN MOTIVATION THEORIES.....</i>	<i>7</i>
4.1.1.1. GARDNER'S MOTIVATION THEORY .....	8
4.1.1.2. DÖRNYEI'S L2 MOTIVATION SELF SYSTEM .....	9
<i>4.2. DEMOTIVATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>4.3. MOTIVATING FROM THE TEACHERS POINT OF VIEW .....</i>	<i>12</i>
<b>5. FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNER ANXIETY.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>6. FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS' BELIEVES .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>6.2.1. TEACHER BELIEVES: DO THEY AFFECT THE LEARNER? .....</i>	<i>17</i>
<b>7. FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND THE THREE INDIVIDUAL VARIABLES.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>8. CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>9. REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>21</b>

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The assessment of a learner's process is a practice that has long been carried out by teacher and instructors' for a long time. Nevertheless, this assessment does have some repercussion on the learner and may lead them to want to stop their learning journey. Language learning and its assessment face the same type of problem. There are different assessment types, all with their benefits and drawbacks. However, formative assessment seems to be an assessment option that gives learners the chance to practice their language skills and be given feedback almost immediately, with no need to wait for a semester report. Moreover, formative assessment may allow students to feel more motivated, as they see their progress first hand, and may change the overall image they have of L2 learning. Subsequently, this paper's aim is to define formative assessment, in section three of the project, and determine its usefulness to motivate students and change their perception of L2 learning. In order to do so, this paper's second section is going to focus on the distinction between second language and foreign language learning to establish the focus on foreign language learning. Moreover, the fourth section will be dedicated to motivation, with the aim to define it and draw connections to formative assessment. Moreover, anxiety and learners' beliefs are thought to be two variables that affect motivation and may pose a problem to the implementation of formative assessment and its latter success. Thus, the fifth and sixth sections of this paper are going to be dedicated to the definition of the concepts in a language learning environment and to the possible problems they may cause in formative assessment. Finally, this paper is going to discuss formative assessment and its connection to the three individual variables in order to determine whether or not formative assessment is the best option to motivate students and show a positive view of L2 learning, which will lead to the conclusion.

## **2. SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING**

Everyone in the world is able to speak and understand, at least, one language also known as first language or mother tongue, assuming that there are no language disorders involved. Harmer (2002, p. 82) explains that when learning this first language the individual

does not have to do any work, as the exposure to the language that they are surrounded by is what helps the learning process. This subconscious process is language acquisition, which differs from language learning that is a conscious process. Nevertheless, debates on this hypothesis are still on, as some scholars do not make a distinction between learning and acquiring, talking about different levels of awareness during the learning/acquiring continuum. Harmer (2002, p. 82) suggests that there is a widely spread believe the exposure to language only is not enough to learn a language and that one needs to make a conscious act of attention to the language that is being used in order to able to learn it, mainly in learners who have gone through puberty (i.e. teens and adults). Thus, which are the differences between second language learning (SLL) and foreign language learning (FLL)?

### *2.1. SECOND LANGUAGE OR FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING*

It is important to make this differentiation between learning and acquiring a second language. On the one hand, second language acquisition (SLA) is the learning of a language where the language being learnt is the means of everyday communication (e.g. Catalan/Spanish in Barcelona). On the other hand, foreign language learning (FLL) is the learning of a language, usually in a classroom setting, in a context where the language being learnt is not widely used in the community (e.g. English in Paris). Thus, the difference between SLA and FLL is whether the target language (TL) is used for everyday communication (Celaya, 2018; class notes).

Additionally, the differences between second language learning (SLL) and foreign language learning (FLL) is important to note. Peng (2019, op cit. Stern, 1983) states that the difference between SLL and FLL are based on the terms of “language functions, learning purposes, language environment and learning methods”. He goes on to say that foreign language makes reference to a language that is used outside of the country of origin of the student (i.e.: Spanish native speaker learning English as a job prospect asset), whereas a second language is a language that has as much importance as the mother tongue of the student (i.e.: Catalan native speaker learning Spanish as their second mother tongue). Furthermore, this distinction is important to make for the purposes of this paper, as it is FLL context that the analysis of formative assessment will be made.

Moreover, Lightbown and Spada (2013, p.123-127) explain the two settings in which a language can be learned: natural or instructional. The natural setting is explained as the setting

in which learners are exposed to language in different daily situations where most of the speakers are native speakers of the TL. Additionally, the natural setting could be associated with SLA and how the learner is immersed in the TL and learns the language in a similar way a baby or a child would. Nevertheless, the instructional setting is introduced as that in which there is a focus on the language itself rather than on the message carried by the language, and there is also a focus in the language and interaction, conversation and language use. This latter setting, is the one found in schools and would be typically associated with FLL, and how the second language is only learned in a classroom setting, be it in a school or a language school. Lightbown and Spada (2013, p. 123-127) state that this structure-based instructional setting language is presented one item at a time, errors are frequently corrected, learning is often limited to a few hours a per week and the teacher is often the only native or proficient speaker that the student comes into contact with. Also, students experience a limited range of discourse types, students often feel pressure to speak or write the second language from the beginning and teachers may use the learners' native language to give instruction or to manage the classroom, attempting to ensure comprehension, which although typical may not always be the case. Nevertheless, one has to bear in mind that structure-based instructional settings are not the only setting that exists, as CLIL, content-based or project work are instructional settings that are progressively starting to be used nowadays, too. It is important to establish a distinction between SLA and FLL, since this paper will focusing on FLL assessment and its relationship with student motivation and perception of L2. Nevertheless, making reference to SLL and FLL, students may experience SLL in an instructional context too or FLL may not be restricted to instruction only, as global multimedia makes it possible to create conditions which may close the gap between SLL and FLL, highlighting again the need to see language learning as a continuum and not a dichotomy.

In addition, this paper will focus on the instructional setting, as it is where teachers have a prominent role in the assessment of the students' language learning journey. The role teachers have is that of teaching the language as well as helping the student through their language learning experience. Nevertheless, no two students are alike. Lightbown and Spada (2013, p. 77-90) introduce the concept of individual differences or variables. This concept is described as the enduring personal characteristics that are summed to apply to everyone and on which people differ by degree. Lightbown and Spada (2013, p 77-90) list the following individual differences as the ones which have been mainly investigated in the exploration for differences in learning outcomes: intelligence, language learning aptitude, learning style, personality,



attitude and motivation, motivation in the classroom, identity and ethnic group affiliation and, finally, learner beliefs. From these ones, this paper will focus on three of the eight: 1) motivation, as a whole concept; 2) the concept of anxiety, which is within the personality variable; and finally 3) learner beliefs. The decision to focus on these three variables is made on the belief that, in FLL, teachers can perhaps have an active role in helping the learner move forward in order to reach their language learning goals, as well as providing them with a more positive view of FLL that will affect positively their attitudes, by means of formative assessment.

### **3. ASSESSMENT**

The assessment of a student is a common practice in education in order to determine whether or not the student has acquired the knowledge that the teacher had planned as goals in the syllabus. Nevertheless, the way a student is assessed may not benefit them and have counteractive results. Therefore, this section will focus on two greatly used assessment styles, summative and formative, in order to better understand them and set a reference point for the rest of the paper.

#### ***3.1.ASSESSMENT TYPES***

##### **3.1.1. SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT**

Summative assessment is described as “any assessment activity which results in a mark or grade which is subsequently used as judgement on student performance.” (Irons, 2008, p. 7). This type of assessment is intended to summarise what students have learned and it usually occurs after the instruction has been completed, be it at the end of the school year or a unit (Myers, 2019, p. 7).

Moreover, because summative assessment is the reflection of what a student has learned in the past (Ahmed, Ali & Ali Shah, 2019, p 110-111), summative assessment presents some drawbacks for the student. The most agreed drawback, states Myers (2019, p. 7), has been determined to be the waiting process this type of assessment requires in order to get back feedback. Meaning that because the assessment is done at the end of a term or unit very little,

if anything, can be done to help the learner with their deficiencies. Moreover, Myers (2019, p. 7) goes on to say that using class, school or district norms in order to determine whether or not each student's performance is appropriate may be misleading, and it can have serious consequences for the student, as for example not being promoted to the next grade.

Thus, one may interpret summative assessment as it being an assessment style that relies mainly on grades and scores. Furthermore, given its delayed feedback nature, summative assessment may not provide a proper summary or reflection of the student's level of knowledge past a certain point in time. This lack of a synchronic reflection of student knowledge would then only be resolved if constant testing is done to ensure an adequate following of student progress. However, constant testing would eventually take a toll on both the student and the teacher.

### 3.1.2. FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Formative assessment is described by Irons (2008, p. 7) as "Any task or activity which creates feedback (or feedforward) for students about their learning. Formative assessment does not carry a grade which is subsequently used in summative judgement". Another definition of what formative assessment is could be "the process of understanding to identify learners' needs, which involves monitoring, diagnosis, and action, and shapes students learning as well as informs teachers about how to adjust their teachings, appropriately"(Ahmed, Ali and Ali Shah, 2019, p. 111).

As Myers (2019, p7, op. cit. Irving, 2007) suggests formative assessment takes place when the instruction is being done, meaning that this style of assessment can provide feedback to both, the learner and the teacher. He goes on to say that the feedback provided in formative assessment is a contextualized one, meaning that the teacher can determine what are the concepts or skills that have been mastered, or not, in order to restructure their lessons to better cater to these concepts or skills that have not been completely understood. In addition, Brown (2004) states that formative assessment is an ongoing process that will remain active after a question is answered by the student, the student offers a comment or they try out a new word or structure.

Yet, just like summative assessment, formative assessment also has some drawbacks. Myers's (2019, p 7) main concerns are the fact that, from a teachers' point of view, the students are the ones who have to make an effort in order to actually grasp the concepts they are being

taught, if not, it does not matter how much the teacher tries because the learner will not move forward; a second concern is that formative assessment gives advantage to those students who are not able to master a skill fast, which the students who are capable of completing work accurately and in time may consider to be unfair; finally, Myers (2019, p 7) is also concerned with the negative time factor, meaning that formative assessment is a very time consuming assessment style for teachers and it may lead to stress and overwork.

However, Myers (2019, p7, op. cit. McTighe & O'Connor: 2005) suggests the use of summative assessment as a way to make sure that formative assessment is taken seriously by those students who do not involve themselves enough, seeing how summative assessment has the element of reporting to the parents and this would force them to be active and not slack off. Therefore, one could understand that the combination or hybrid of summative assessment and formative assessment in a 20/80 ratio, respectively, would be a way to mitigate the different disadvantages that both assessment styles present. Nevertheless, this paper will focus on the use of formative assessment as a whole, meaning that the suggested assessment combination style above will not be taken into account when analysing student individual variables, which were introduced in the last section, in order to determine the effectiveness of formative assessment as an aid for teachers to help students with motivation and anxiety.

#### **4. MOTIVATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING**

Motivation and its usefulness has been recognised and studied by many linguists, seeing how it has been established as an important factor that can help explain the success, or lack thereof, in FLL (Ushioda, 2012, p.77-83). In this section, and its subsections, the concept of motivation will be explored, as well as making connections to formative assessment and how they maintain a two-way beneficial relationship.

Ushioda (2012, p.77-83) gives a brief background to the history of motivation studies. They draw a timeline, starting from the 1970s, where L2 motivation research was mainly based in the social-psychological perspective that followed the work of Gardner and Lambert. This approach speculated that L2 motivation had social and psychological dimensions that made it different from other forms of motivation. This supposition led Gardner and Lambert (1972) to suggest two types of motivation orientation in language learning: integrative motivation, the learner identifies themselves with the L2 speaking community, and instrumental motivation,

the learner will achieve a certain functional goal through learning the L2 but they have no other motivation, therefore no further knowledge will be gained (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Ushioda follows by mentioning that this approach received a lot of criticism because it just highlighted the desire to promote the TL culture and positive attitude towards it, and did not, or barely, provide genuine useful insight for the teacher. This is described as the turning point in which L2 motivation research started to expand its scope during the 1990s, and was majorly influenced by the mainstream educational psychology and gave more attention to language learning in the context of a classroom and to practical pedagogical issues, as for example the development and sustainability of motivation. At the end of the timeline, Ushioda mentions the current trends of L2 motivation research. They mention that the analysis of L2 motivation is now influenced by the debates within applied linguistics about migration, globalization, cultural identity, etc.

It has been in recent years that scholars have focused on the importance of self-concept as a result of Zoltán Dörnyei's L2 motivation self-system. Self-concept includes both cognitive and affective dimensions (Mercer, 2011:65, op. cit. Csizér and Magid, 2014). Research into identity and self-related issues in very recent years not only proved that motivation is part of the learners' identity as a workable concept, but also it created a new wave of studies that aimed at finding out how self-related issues actually impact L2 learning in general and L2 motivation processes in particular (Csizér and Magid, 2014, p.7-16).

#### *4.1.MAIN MOTIVATION THEORIES*

Nowadays, most studies which are being carried out concerning motivation follow Dörnyei's L2 Motivation Self System. This theory steamed because the original Motivation Theory by Gardner (1985) does not have the ability to 'capture the new conceptualisation of social identity' (Tort, 2015, p 3-12). Tort (2015, p3-12) explains that this reconceptualization of L2 motivation theories was due to the dissatisfaction caused by the traditional model of L2 motivation as researches wanted to extend the theory so that it could apply to different situations and the growth of World English. They follow by stating that the difference in motivation is student not only wanting to communicate with native, but also with non-native speakers of the TL.

Therefore, in this subsection the two theories, Gardner's and Dörnyei's, are going to be explained in order to have a chronology of the evolution of motivation studies, as well as to provide a reference point for when motivation is being discussed as one of the individual variables that affect learners' success or failure in FLL in the following sections.

#### 4.1.1.1. GARDNER'S MOTIVATION THEORY

In his book *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The role of Attitudes and Motivation* (1985) Gardner introduces his motivation theory. Gardner's (1985) model of motivation introduced two types of motivation: 1) instrumental motive, the practical reason as to why the learner wants to learn a language (e.g. a certificate, better job prospects); and 2) integrative motive, "the learners desire to communicate or integrate with the members of the TL community" (Gardner, 1985). Gardner focused on the former form of motivation.

Gardner bases his theory in the idea of motivation being a broad concept that possesses cognitive and affective characteristics. Gardner defines motivation to learn a second language as the combination of effort, the desire to achieve the goal of learning a language and favourable attitudes towards learning the language. They follow this description by stating that this motivation is the extent to which the learner is willing to go to in order to learn the language and the learners desire to do so and the satisfaction they will experience in doing the activity. Furthermore, when commenting on the theory, Dörnyei (1998, p.117-128) stated that Gardner's theory has three different areas. The first one is integrative orientation: personal, affective disposition towards the L2 community, the desire to interact with them or become a member of a community. The second one is social-educational model: this model suggests that there are two primary individual difference variables in language learning, ability and motivation. The factors are expected to be relatively independent from each other because even if a student has high ability they may have high or low motivation, or the other way around. Moreover, ability and motivation are linked to the formal (e.g. classroom) and informal (e.g. watching movies) language learning context, and both contexts lead to linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes. When revised in 2001, Gardner introduced the concept of integrative motivation within the individual difference variabilities and divided it in two components: attitudes towards the learning situation and integrativeness. Finally, the third area is attitude/motivation

test Battery: The test developed by Gardner in order to measure the different aspects of his Social-educational model.

#### 4.1.1.2. DÖRNYEI'S L2 MOTIVATION SELF SYSTEM

Dörnyei's L2 Motivation Self System, as Tort (2015, p.3-12) comments, tries to expand the traditional conceptualization of motivation in L2 learning by using psychological theories of the self. To understand Dörnyei's L2 Motivation Self System, one has to know what Higgins's Self-discrepancy Theory was, seeing how Dörnyei based his motivation theory on Higgins's model. Csizér and Magid (2014, p. 7-16) explain that Higgins's focussed only on two types of selves: the *ideal self* and the *ought self*. They go on to mention how Higgins argued that people have a feeling of unease when there is a discrepancy between their actual real-life self and their aspired future self. This psychological tension, in turn, spurs the desire for action towards reducing the gap and it becomes a potent source of motivation. Making the possible self-act as "future guides" that can explain how someone is moved from the present towards the future. Moreover, Dörnyei (2009) states that traditionally, the self-concept has been seen as the summary of the individual's self-knowledge related to how the person views themselves (Csizér and Magid, 2014, p.7-16). Csizér and Magid (2014, p.7-16) mention that the "future dimension of the self-concept", which is how people imagine themselves in the future, of this complex notion has been identified as particularly relevant to motivation research. Csizér and Magid (2014, p.7-16) go on to say that the "future self-states" have a strong motivational impact as seen in Higgins's (1987,1998) self-discrepancy theory.

The L2 Motivation Self System by Dörnyei is composed by three dimensions that when combined are supposed to motivate the learner to learn the L2. The three dimensions are: 1) *Ideal Self*, "L2-specific facet of one's 'ideal self'" (Dörnyei, 2009) and is where integrative and instrumental motives would be classified in; 2) *Ought-to self*, "the attributes that one believes one ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes" (Dörnyei, 2009) and corresponds to the less internalised form of instrumental motives; and 3) *L2 Learning Experience*, "'executive' motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience" (Dörnyei, 2009). Thus the new approach is concerned two future self-guides associated with imagined experience and a third constituent rooted in actual experience (Csizér and Magid, 2014, p.7-16). Furthermore, Csizér and Magid (2014, p.7-16) state that "vision" is

a key aspect to future self-guide because, while individuals may pursue language learning for a variety of reasons, the equivalent wide array of reasons keeping their motivation alive is the vision of who they want to become as a L2 user, which seems to be one of the most reliable predictors of their long-term intended effort.

Therefore, Dörnyei's theory on motivation shows how the student is motivated by the goals and the ideals that they have created for their future. These "future self-guides" are the ones which allow the student to move forward in their learning journey and the vision of who they want to become as L2 user, will predict long-term motivation. It is because the learner is the one who decides how to structure their learning that formative assessment would be of help, seeing how this assessment style provides the student with constant feedback that will allow to make the necessary changes in time in order to fulfil their expectations created by their future self-guides and vision.

Moreover, it is predicted that formative assessment will affect motivation on two levels. On the one hand, if the student is able to create their future self-guides and have in mind the vision of who they want to become, then formative assessment will benefit the students' motivation as they will be able to constantly practice and improve their language skills. On the other hand, if the student does not have any motivation or motivation is interrupted because of external or internal reasons, then formative assessment could be used as a way to remotivate the student by slowly increasing their participation rate in an attempt to help them overcome their problems. What is more, formative assessment and motivation appear to be very tightly linked as they seem influence each other. If the student is not motivated, then formative assessment seems to be a solution to make the student get back on track to continue their FLL journey. Furthermore, if the student is highly motivated it is thought that they will be more willing to be active in class and be able to take advantage of the feedback that formative assessment gives.

#### *4.2. DEMOTIVATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING*

The lack of motivation is one of the struggles language learners go through and may lead to wanting to give up L2 learning. Having a humiliating experience or getting disheartening test results may lead the student to be demotivated, because they do not see the meaning or purpose behind learning a foreign language based on the disheartening feelings,

which they have experienced in the classroom. This feeling of demotivation is thought to be the result of summative assessment lack of constant feedback. Thus, in this subsection demotivation and its sources will be explored.

Kikuchi (2019, p.172 -173) carried out a study in order to answer Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2011) call for research into language learners' reasons for studying, in this case for Japanese students of English. The results of the study showed that students were not given rich L2 experiences, even though each participant had had experiences with the language outside of school, they found it very hard to motivate themselves find good language learning experiences on their own in their daily lives. Kikuchi concluded that learners in EFL situations have a hard time finding reasons to study, if rich L2 experience and personal goals to use English are missing, which creates a situation where the student does not study hard for extended periods of time.

Furthermore, in a study conducted by Gearing (2019, p. 207-216) 14 students of Korean from English speaking countries, who were in Korea as EFL teachers, were recruited in order to investigate the motivation of L1 English speakers to learn the national language of the country in which they reside. Gearing (2019, p. 207-216) concludes that demotivation can be seen as existing on a continuum, as lack of motivation represents the culmination of multiple demotivating experiences. Gearing (2019, p. 207-216) also state that the combination of Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) list of nine demotivating factors, which is in order of decreasing importance and consists of: 1) teacher personality, 2) inadequate school resources, 3) reduced self-confidence, 4) negative attitudes towards the L2, 5) compulsory need to study the L2, 6) interference from another language being studied, 7) negative attitudes towards the L2 community, 8) attitudes of group members, and 9) coursebook; and Sakai and Kikuchi (2009, p. 57-69) six factor model of student demotivation: 1) teachers, 2) characteristics of classes, 3) experience of failure, 4) class environment, 5) class materials and 6) lack of interest, provide a comprehensive framework of the most important factors and experiences comprising demotivation from the perspective of the learner who may then enter the language classroom where the powerful response they brought with them from the outside may then be triggered by classroom practices.

Thus, demotivation is big factor of FLL continuity, in that if the student is not motivated enough or at all they will not find it useful to pull themselves to follow with their vision of L2 learning. Demotivating factors can be internal or external to the classroom, however, the use of formative assessment as a tool to help students be able to better themselves as language



learners and provide the student with other learning techniques that would aid them by means of feedback, could be seen as key to ensure students' motivation.

#### *4.3.MOTIVATING FROM THE TEACHERS POINT OF VIEW*

“Motivation is undoubtedly a key practical concern for language teachers, more often than not because it is regarded as a problem” (Ushioda, 2012, p. 77). Nowadays, as demonstrated by the shift in motivation research, students are able to learn a language without a teacher. High self-motivation can be a very powerful driver when it comes to TL learning evolution. Nevertheless, teachers are still relevant in language learning, which is why it is important to ensure that they are aware of the ever-changing nature of motivation and they learn how to deal with motivation in the classroom.

In addition, several techniques and methods have been explored and developed in order to help students maintain motivation. Davies and Pearse (2000, p. 12-13) state that some aspects of motivation may be beyond the teachers influence. They go on to state that teachers have to be able to convince even reluctant language learners that the TL is worth learning. They suggest setting goals and objectives can give direction and the will to work, and any success in real communication will motivate the student. They also highlight the fact that worthwhile and achievable short-term objective will be key in learner satisfaction. They also suggest having a great variety of themes that will be of the student's interests will be more motivating for the learner. Also Davies and Pearse (2000, p. 12-13) mention that “English does not belong to any specific country”, which can be related to Dörnyei's application of L2 Self in the current World English situation. Moreover, they mention that a good relationship between Teacher and students will benefit both the teacher, because they get an idea as to what the learner likes, and the student, as the teacher is targeting their hobbies/likes to make learning more appealing. Furthermore, Ushioda (2012, 77-83) mentions how “motivation needs to be driven rather than regulated by the teacher”. However, they highlight the practice of “learner-centred” teaching, which just like Davies and Pearse (2000, p. 12-13) mention is the engaging of the personal interests' of the student, as a very important resource to use in class in order to motivate the learner.

Additionally to motivation strategies, teachers should also focus on teaching or showcasing re-motivating strategies. In the aforementioned study by Gearing (2019, p. 207-

216) they mention “re-motivating strategies” that the students used in order to counter the demotivation they were feeling towards language learning. Individuals stated that the following methods worked in order to regain their motivation to keep learning the TL: buying new books; taking breaks and then trying again; the realization that they understood more than they thought, which motivated them more; engaging in enjoyable L2 activities, such as listening to music, watching films or TV series in the TL; engaging in simpler conversations in the TL; or keeping their L2 vision by enrolling in another program with different teaching methods.

Subsequently, one could suggest that teachers, aside from the motivating methods, which they are provided by teacher training literature, also use and suggest to the student the re-motivation strategies used by the participants in the study by Gearing (2019, p. 207-216) or others that have the same goal, in order to provide students with options for them not to completely give up L2 learning. Moreover, motivation in formative assessment is important, as states Irons (2008, p. 35 - 39), because there is a need for the student to be motivated to participate in formative activities and to engage with and learn from the feedback that they will be provided with. Thus, making motivation a key feature of the most effective way to use formative assessment. Additionally, Cauley & McMillan (2010, p. 1-6 ) suggest providing clear learning targets, as they provide the student with a great sense of ownership of their learning; offering feedback on the process towards meeting the students learning targets, as it gives students positive expectations for their vision; attributing student success and mastery to moderate effort, showing that not all effort will result in immediate results that helps the student not feel hopeless immediately; encourage student self-assessment, which makes the student be the one in charge of their learning; and finally, helping the student set attainable goals for improvement as some resources teachers could use in order to promote formative assessment.

## **5. FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNER ANXIETY**

So far, the relationship between assessment and motivation has been explored. It has been determined that motivation and formative assessment have a two-way beneficial relationship, meaning that if one is lacking the other is affected. One of the hypothesised potential dimension that may affect motivation is learner anxiety, since it may lead to demotivation to continue learning a foreign language, which in turn would affect formative

assessment. Thus, in this section learner anxiety will be explored in order to draw some conclusions as to its relationship with motivation and formative assessment.

Learner anxiety, as described by Lightbown and Spada (2013, p85-86), is the feeling of worry, nervousness and stress that many students experience when learning a second language. As Irons (2008, p. 35- 39) stated formative assessment relies on the student motivation to be of actual use as an assessment style. It is because of this dependence on motivation that interferences such as learners' anxiety may lead to formative assessment not being as effective. Moreover, the study of anxiety and its consequences for language learners has been extensively researched.

In an effort to measure anxiety, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986, p.125 - 132) developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) in order to detect which are the students who are particularly anxious in the L2 class. The scale contained three components: communication anxiety, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Moreover, Aida (1994, p.155 - 165) conducted a study in order to prove whether or not Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986, p.125 - 132) FLCAS was actually reliable even with non-western languages such as Japanese. The study identified four factors to measure anxiety among students: speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation fear of failing, comfortableness in speaking with native Japanese, and negative attitudes towards the class. The study also concluded that the FLCAS component "test anxiety" is not relevant for foreign language anxiety as it can be seen other subjects other than language. Additionally, Lightbown and Spada (2013, p85-86) state that this scales do not take into account the possibility of anxiety being temporary and context-specific, to which Aida (1994, p.155 - 165) agreed.

Moreover, MacIntyre (1995, p. 93-96) states that anxiety will interfere with the student's ability to demonstrate the amount of knowledge they have because of the cyclic relationship between anxiety and task performance, the more a student experiences failure the higher their anxiety level will become. Additionally, Young (1991, p. 542-551) identified the five main factors that cause language anxiety: personal and interpersonal, learner beliefs about language learning, instructor's beliefs about language teaching, instructor-learner interactions and classroom procedures and language testing. It is interesting to see that "learner's beliefs about language learning" is one of the factors that add to the students' anxiousness, because it is also an individual variable that affects the success of FLL.

Thus, one can understand that anxiety is a key factor in motivation, which subsequently affects formative assessment. If the student feels anxious when performing a task they will not be able to showcase their true potential, making the feedback they receive redundant or

pointless. Furthermore, the lack of helpful feedback could lead the student to feel demotivated, as they are constantly being corrected on errors they make because of anxiety and not on the potential errors they would make if there was no anxiety. This lack of motivation could then be transformed in the student not wanting to participate in class, which would make formative assessment redundant.

## **6. FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS' BELIEFS**

Every learner has some type of expectation regarding the way they are to be taught and about their skills. This beliefs may lead to the existence of disagreement between what the learner expects and what they are presented with, in the teaching aspect. Lightbown and Spada (2013, p85-86) mention, as Young (1991, p. 542-551) had previously identified, that learner's believes in language learning is a factor that contributes to learner's anxiety, and consequently to their motivation to keep learning a language. It is because of this interconnected nature between these three variables that formative assessment may be affected in a negative way, should the student not be motivated enough to actually partake in class activates or tasks.

Moreover, studies have shown that there is a correlation between the learners' beliefs and their perception of language learning, which is connected to motivation and anxiety. Kormos et al. (2011, p, 507) conducted a study in order to investigate the structure of language learning based on Dörnyei's L2 Motivation Self System. They concluded that the self-related beliefs play a big role in L2-learning motivation and the importance of future self-guides as well as the goals students have set. Moreover, they found that the most important goal for the participants was related to English as a lingua franca (ELF), which coincides with the new trend of motivation studies. Additionally, when talking about goals and motivation, Cho, Yough & Levesque-Bristol (2019, op cit. Huang and Tsai, 2003; Tang and Tain, 2015) state that students who hold adaptive beliefs about learning are the ones to show a higher proficiency in language learning. They go on to state that assessment can have an impact on the effort and learning outcomes of the student when that have interest, recognise that there is a utility value and find relevance in learning. Moreover, when talking about self-regulated learning, Cho, Yough & Levesque-Bristol (2019, p.2-3) state that because students are able to organise and set their own goals, this type of student will most likely be able to control their motivation and behaviour to reach the goals and overcome any type of difficulty. They add, that effective

assessment practices and feedback can influence motivational beliefs, meaning that students' beliefs about assessment can influence students' self-regulates learning. After conducting a study, Cho, Yough & Levesque-Bristol (2019, p 9) concluded that adaptive beliefs about assessment are closely associated with self-regulatory learning strategies, which affects students' perception of knowledge transferability. They also concluded that once a student has recognized the benefits from "assessment, fairness of assessment, authentic aspects of assessment and consistency with learning objectives" they are able to make use of metacognitive strategies to help their leaning, and belief their learning is valuable even outside of the classroom setting. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Dincer (2017, p. 107- 111) results showed that learners' beliefs, in what regards speaking, seem to be associated with their level of achievement in English the courses. Dincer (2017, p. 107- 111) goes on to state that negative beliefs are associated with a high level of anxiety and a low level of achievement, which may discourage learners and lead them to not make as much of an effort.

In addition, studies have also focused on the surroundings of the learner to see if there is any type of correlation between the two. Gopang et al. (2016, op. cit. Atlan, 2006) suggest that students have a set of fixed beliefs about FLL, to which Akbari's (2019) study of learners' misconceptions and erroneous beliefs in an Iranian context agrees as they concluded that participants had stable firm beliefs that were rooted to their educational experience of learning English. Additionally, Alhamami (2020, p. 7-11) concludes their study by stating "the beliefs of the people who are important to the students seem to vary with the learning context".

Subsequently, one may think that the past experiences of the student in language learning, their preconceived ideas and their current knowledge of the TL are the main dictators of their beliefs about language learning, which are the ones that set the expectations for future language learning. Moreover, negative beliefs lead to demotivation, anxiety and a lack of future self-guides, which reinforces the aforementioned concept of these three particular individual variables –motivation, anxiety and learners' belief- being connected to the success of both language learning and the implementation of formative assessment. Therefore, it could be suggested that, because formative assessment relies on class activities and not tests to evaluate the language skills of the student, the positive experiences that the student may experience would be able to compensate for the past negative ones. This way students' perception of FLL and its usefulness would change to a more positive one, helping them decrease their anxiety and increasing their motivation.

### 6.2.1. *TEACHER BELIEFS*

As discussed in the section above, teachers play a big role in the creation of learners' beliefs even if it is not their intent. It has already been established that past experiences of FLL will affect the learner. Therefore, teachers should aim at changing their learners' beliefs on FLL in order to help them through their learning journey and not contribute to the hindrances the learner may generate themselves.

In addition, Akbari (2019, p.39) notes that even though teachers made an effort to change their students' beliefs, there was no great change in their preconceived views. Nevertheless, they mention that by empowering their students with knowledge and expertise to meet students' educational and professional needs teachers were having an impact, albeit slight, on the student's beliefs. They go on to suggest that teachers should aim to eliminating this deeply rooted beliefs in order to prevent anxiety, demotivation and lack of progress in the learners'. Furthermore, Alhamami (2020, p. 8-23) concludes that "language teachers should study, analyse and understand the beliefs of people who are important to the language learner" in order to effectively design the materials and teaching methods they are going to use.

Additionally, Ahmad et al. (2017, p. 130-142) study about grammar teaching, reveals that the beliefs of non-native EFL teachers are not aligned with their students' perceptions about the teachers' grammar teaching practices. They also mention that the majority of the teachers believed that inductive and deductive teaching should be employed depending on the circumstances and highlight the fact that most teachers also integrated grammar in the teaching of the other skills to facilitate the learning of grammar. They conclude by suggesting a close collaboration between both, teachers and students, in order to close the gap between students' expectations and teachers' classroom practices.

Nevertheless, in Alghazo's (2015, p.68) study, which regarded pronunciation of English, results showed that students preferred teachers adopting an approach that focused on features that may cause communication difficulties, rather than focusing on the overall sounds. Students also voiced their preference for intuitive styles of teaching. One could think, then, that students prefer to have their common mistakes highlighted and then be given feedback on what they should improve in order to advance in their language learning journey, rather than being presented with just a holistic view of what they have to emulate. Subsequently, one may suggest that teachers give feedback constantly for students to see that they are advancing in their language learning journey and for teachers to monitor and be able to cater to the students' needs, as provided by formative assessment.

## 7. FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND THE THREE INDIVIDUAL VARIABLES

Throughout this paper the connection between three individual variables, motivation, anxiety and learners' beliefs which directly affect the success in language learning, and formative assessment has been explored.

First, formative assessment was established as an assessment style that focuses on the learner by means of needs' identification and the providing of feedback, almost immediately, to help the learner improve. Moreover, as Akbari's (2019, p. 39) states the role of assessment should be that of obtaining information about learning gaps and to close them as much as possible in the learning context. It is because formative assessment takes place while the instruction is ongoing (Myers, 2017, p. 7) the feedback that it provides can be interpreted as better for targeting errors the student makes in a specific context. Additionally, because of formative assessment is based on the carrying out of tasks or activities as a method of instruction that the student is given the chance to display their skills and be corrected or praised in their learning continuum, which is a way to close the learning gap (2019, p. 39) mentions. Although formative assessment has some drawbacks, as it has a time consuming nature for the teacher or because it heavily relies on the students actually making an effort to make changes based on the feedback provided, this type of assessment allows for both: the teacher too more accurately be able to assess the students' progress and for the student to be more aware of their learning.

In addition, motivation is a key feature for the implementation of formative assessment to actually have successful results. Dörnyei's (2009) L2 motivation self-system states that the combination of the *ideal self*, *the ought self* and *the L'' learning experience* is what is going to motivate the learner. This way, the three future self-guides, convinced with the learners' vision, will become the push the learners need in order to maintain motivation. As mentioned before, Irons (2008, p. 35-39) states that motivation is a key feature for formative assessment, as it is the element that will make the students willingly participate in class activities and tasks. It is because formative assessment relies on students' interactions in order for the teacher to be able to generate feedback, if the student lacks motivation to participate in class then formative assessment is redundant or ineffective. Furthermore, Irons (2008, p. 35-39) states that teachers should take great care in ensuring that the positive statement that they provide the student with are actually helpful and not demotivate the student. Demotivation can have two outcomes in formative assessment: 1) the aforementioned lack of participation from the student, and 2) it can help the student be motivated again based on the feedback they are provided by the teacher.

As it was stated in the motivation subsection on the teachers' role with motivation, motivation maintaining methods, as provided by teacher training literature, and remotivating methods are important - mostly the former type - because the learner themselves have to put in the effort to stay motivated, which is tightly linked to formative assessment's reliance on student self-regulation.

Furthermore, anxiety has been shown to be a key factor that affects motivation, which in turn affects formative assessment. This variable may be only momentarily and only show when the learner is performing a written or spoken task. Thus, the interference that is created in the moment of demonstration of the students' abilities will increase the anxiety the student feels, meaning that the more anxious a student feels, the worse they will carry out a task that can lead to more anxiety. It is important to note, that if the student feels anxiety in the language class, the motivation to participate will decrease, as well as the overall motivation to learn the language. A study conducted by Bayat, Jamshidipour & Hashemi (2017, p. 9), in which they researched the efficacy of formative assessment in Iranian university student's anxiety reduction by means of formative testing during a term, results of the testing showed that formative assessment was very effective in reducing learners' anxiety. One could think that because formative assessment is based on tasks that can be shared with other learners and not on tests, which may lead to test anxiety, the learner can adjust the level of comfort they feel in class and slowly increase their participation over time.

Finally, learners' beliefs will also affect motivation, as students' past experiences in a FLL class will be set as the students' expectations. If students are made to self-regulate their study, as state Cho, Yough & Levesque-Bristol (2019, p.9), an increase in motivation to reach their goals would be achieved, because the student is the one to set their own goals. Moreover, formative assessment is a good way to have students self-regulate by means of the feedback provided by the teacher and not by using the goals set by the course that may not be achievable for some, which as Dincer (2017, p. 110) states negative beliefs are associated with anxiety. In a study carried out by Milošević & Cvetković (2019, p.140-146) results show that if teachers see students withdraw from the tasks carried out in class, teachers' expectations lower, which affects students' motivation and self-esteem impacting on the general learning and more specifically in the FLL class. Nevertheless, free interaction between students and students being able to ask their queries to the teacher, resulted in the teacher scaffolding the learning process and the student was able to keep doing the task. Milošević & Cvetković (2019, p.140-146) concluded that there is a strong connection between class activities and confidence, stating that if students are motivated and view the activities as relevant, they will participate. They



also mention that overall, formative assessment was a very good way for students to gain confidence as it provided them with more opportunities for language development.

Although students will have expectations set based on former language learning experiences and they may not be willing to participate during the initial period of the course, if the student is able to see or be influenced to realise the positive outcomes of FLL through formative assessment the learner will be able to motivate themselves. Thus, setting a vision that is going to be pushed forward by the future self-guide that will also be created and disregard anxiety and their former beliefs about FLL because the influence of formative assessment gives them enough confidence and motivation to go through their learning journey.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

The goal of this paper, first and foremost, was to address whether or not formative assessment was the best option to motivate learners and change learners' perspective on FLL to a positive one. In what regards this first thought, the literature review as well as studies showed that formative assessment has a very positive impact on students' motivation and perception of FLL. This conclusion was reached after three individual variables, from the eight described by Lightbown and Spada (2013, p.77-90), were chosen in order to see the impact they had in the implementation of formative assessment. It was concluded that the three individual variables were interconnected, and that the lack or excess of one was not positive for formative assessment. Regarding motivation, it has been shown that, based on Dörnyei's L2 motivation self-system, learners have three future self-guides, which when combined and paired with vision of their goals, provides them with the motivation to push through the FLL journey. Additionally, demotivation proved to be an important drawback for formative assessment, as it relies heavily on students' motivation to participate in class activities (Irons, 2008, p 35-39). Nevertheless, remotivating strategies that students can use, as demonstrated in Gearing (2019, p. 207-216) study, demonstrated the importance of students being the ones to self-regulate their learning, which formative assessment incentivises. Furthermore, with regard to anxiety and learners' beliefs, this paper found that it is the main factor that affects motivation and, consequently, formative assessment is anxiety. Anxiety was found to be the main reason for demotivation and negative beliefs are associated with anxiety (Dincer, 2017, p. 110). This tight relationship between this two variables, can be counteracted by means of formative assessment as well as the implementation of self-regulated study as they boost confidence, as

shown in Milošević & Cvetković (2019) study. Although formative assessment may be hindered by the negative aspects of anxiety and learners' beliefs, it is possible that by using formative assessment the student becomes less anxious and their beliefs on FLL change based on the new class experience. Therefore, this paper is evidence that the long term use of formative assessment is able to better motivate students, reduce their anxiety and change their beliefs on FLL by means of confidence boosting and constant feedback reception. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the possibility of a hybrid assessment type, which combined the motivating nature of formative assessment and the more traditional scoring system of summative assessment, would be worth researching and developing in order to maximise the two assessment types' assets.

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